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23 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR:

[Redacted]

Policy and Evaluation Staff/OPPPM

FROM:

[Redacted]

Chairman, FBIS GS-14 Subpanel

SUBJECT:

Panel Survey of Performance Appraisal System

REFERENCE:

Your memo of 12 February 1981

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1. We feel the new PAR is a cumbersome form. Several panel members prefer the old one-sheet form. One panel member sees the new form as "highly inflationary" in that definitions are written in such a way that any better than average employee seems to fit in the "6" category, while a whole spread of really good employees fit under "7." Another feels that using a large number of numerical ratings tend to make the PAR seem more precise than it is. The PAR certainly could be shortened, but I personally feel changing the rating system would not be a useful exercise. "Clusters" tend to develop no matter what the system, and every system seems to have the same faults.

2. It is felt that the time involved under the new system and the precepts is far out of proportion to the results achieved. (Our GS-14 subpanel devoted an average of 20 minutes to each employee.) Holding to the written record is seen by some subpanel members as a great limitation, especially in a service such as FBIS where people are rotated frequently, sometimes for short periods. Written records blur strengths, abilities and weaknesses, because they are open to the employee to review. Worksheets also will, inevitably, become vague because they are available to the employee. I think some sort of worksheet is useful in focusing subpanels on the factors to be considered, but I think they will tend to become less meaningful as time goes on. At least one panel member recommends worksheets be completely eliminated.

3. The Evaluation of Potential form is not very useful. Experience is showing that it tends simply to reflect what has already been said either in the basic narrative or the reviewing officer's comment. The statements to be checked are not very helpful to the subpanel. I would suggest the aspect of potential be put back into the basic PAR narrative or the reviewing section.

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4. All of us in the GS-14 Subpanel are strongly against the AWP's. In a rotating service like FBIS, the AWP's are a nightmare. Office of Personnel is insisting on AWP's for even short periods, such as a secretary filling in for three months for another secretary. The paper-work is extensive and meaningless for most levels. Just keeping track is a large bookkeeping job. At least one subpanel member believes AWP's should be done away with at all levels, that they are simply an exercise in "superficiality." My own belief is that the AWP is useful for SIS positions where bonuses are tied to specific goals and activities. It is also useful, possibly, for GS-14's and GS-15's who are in managerial positions. But it is utterly useless for lower level positions. The great bulk of people we rate have basic duties; most specific goals or activities fall within these duties, and need only be pointed out by the supervisor, not made a formal contract. The AWP does not make the supervisor or the employee better. At most grades below SIS the AWP is certainly becoming an exercise in superficiality. The AWP could be replaced by a simple written statement given by supervisors to employees moving into a new job; others should be exempt.

5. Our subpanel used PAR's, interviews with GS-15 supervisors, and the soft file in our deliberations. We found that personal knowledge of an officer's performance was most valued in obtaining a candid view; PAR's were used to backup ratings on factors but were often inaccurate or fuzzy on critical matters such as specific weaknesses; and soft files were sometimes incomplete but other times helpful. The present system is not as good as the previous system FBIS used in which former and present supervisors had a direct input to the subpanel considerations.

6. I do not see how "additional information" per se would be helpful. The problem is to get candid information, and I do not believe we will get that so long as written information is available to the employee and all evaluations must be supported by the written record. A big help would be to discontinue the worksheet, which would promote candid discussions in the subpanel. Any additional procedures or gathering of information would only add to what has already become a costly, time-consuming management procedure.

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Panel Survey of the Performance Appraisal System

The following information is being requested from all Agency career boards and panels. The intent is to receive the greatest amount of input from those most directly involved as we evaluate the performance appraisal system which was effective 1 October 1979. Your cooperation in furnishing us with complete answers, made as detailed as you feel necessary, will be very helpful as the OPPPM completes its evaluation which will be reported to the DCI. When possible your answers should reflect the collective experience and views of your career board/panel.

1. Compare the new performance appraisal system with the former Fitness Report and describe the ways you feel one is better than the other in serving your needs. Please comment specifically about the usefulness and value of the Evaluation of Potential and the Advanced Work Plan for your purposes. Also note any significant shortcomings of the present appraisal system as they effect your function.
2. Identify the information sources (e.g., Performance Appraisals, interviews with supervisors, soft files) you use in your evaluations and the approximate percentage each provides in affecting your decisions. Other than the performance appraisal material, what source has proven to be most valuable and why?
3. In your judgment would additional information on each employee be helpful toward improving the validity of the comparative evaluation process? If so, please describe the kinds of data you feel would be useful (do not concern yourself with the source but rather with the nature of the information).

PLEASE ATTACH YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS SURVEY FORM AND RETURN TO:

Policy and Evaluation Staff/OPPPM
Room 1006 Ames Building

20 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR:

[redacted]
Policy and Evaluation Staff, OPPPM

FROM:

[redacted]
Chairman, FBIS GS-15 Subpanel

SUBJECT:

Panel Survey of Performance Appraisal System

REFERENCE:

Your request of 12 February 1981

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1. In connection with our work in evaluating the FBIS GS-15's, we offer the following observations regarding the current procedures:

a. The PAR form seems longer than necessary. It could be shortened, perhaps back to the length of the fitness report form previously used.

b. The worksheet did not seem particularly useful in our evaluation meeting. The soft files, the PAR's, and the background knowledge of the subpanel provided the basic input. It is possible the worksheet might be useful if one of the persons rated insisted on seeing it, but this has not so far occurred.

c. AWP's were not specifically involved in our most recent evaluation. The AWP does not seem to contribute much additional to the GS-15 level evaluation.

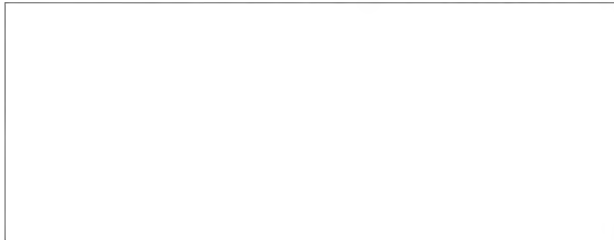
d. We have ample information for judging the work of those at the GS-15 level. I doubt that any further written record or input--which would be available to an employee on demand by the individual--would add to improving the judgment of the subpanel. We should strive to have more candid evaluations, and simply having more wordage would not contribute to that.

2. We are finding in our subpanel meetings at all levels that the new procedures are very time-consuming and costly in terms of management participation. We should move in the direction of shorter forms, more

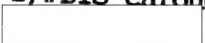
Panel Survey of Performance Appraisal System

candid assessments by supervisors, a sharper focus on necessary duties rather than AWP's--which sometimes seem contrived--and elimination of the separate form on potential which seems largely redundant to the basic PAR.

3. I strongly favor reasonably small subpanels so that wasted time is kept to a minimum.



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